

# News from Ed Markey

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MARKEY SLAMS "FEEBLE" GOP UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS PROPOSAL, BUSH PLAN FAVORS WEALTHY**

**Washington D.C.**— Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Democratic Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today criticized a Republican plan that denies unemployed workers the coverage they need to weather economic problems.

"After allowing unemployment benefits to expire over the holiday season, Republicans now propose a feeble extension package that does not go far enough to protect Americans struggling to find jobs. Republicans are fond of talking about middle-class families facing economic hardship, but when it comes to actually helping them, the GOP is long on rhetoric and short on results. Today I co-sponsored legislation authored by Representatives Charlie Rangel (D-NY) and Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) that provides real assistance to jobless workers," Rep. Markey said.

The Emergency Unemployment Compensation Act introduced by Rep. Rangel and Rep. Cardin extends federally funded unemployment benefits to ensure that all displaced workers and their families receive at least 26 weeks of extended benefits. The bill covers all jobless workers who exhausted their federal benefits over the last six months, workers whose federal benefits were cut-off on December 28, 2002 when Republicans in the House failed to extend them, and workers who became eligible for federal benefits on January 1.

In contrast, the Republican proposal is expected to provide a shorter extension period of 12 weeks, except for unemployed workers in high unemployment states – currently Oregon, Washington State, and Alaska – who will receive a total of 26 weeks. In Massachusetts, approximately 65,000 jobless workers were eliminated from unemployment benefits by the Republicans' failure to extend benefits last year. Under the Democratic bill introduced today, Massachusetts workers who were eligible for federal benefits last year and remain unemployed will be guaranteed 26 weeks of federal unemployment assistance, while they would receive only a maximum of 12 weeks under the Republican plan.

"Today President Bush announced a 'stimulus' plan that primarily stimulates the tax break taste buds of millionaires and corporate chieftains. About half the Bush plan's total value is spent on a dividend tax cut, which the Internal Revenue Service estimates disproportionately benefits those in the upper income brackets. At the same time, Republicans in Congress are introducing an unemployment extension that fails to extend benefits far enough to help all Americans put out of work by the Bush recession. This type of political false advertising from Republicans does not reinvigorate the economy, create jobs or encourage the types of investments needed to get the economy back in high gear.

"The Democrats have a plan to stimulate the job market; the Republican's have a plan to stimulate the stock market. The Democrats' extension bill and economic stimulus package will provide relief for struggling Americans and put money in the pockets of those who not only need it the most, but who will pump it back into the economy by making purchases. I urge Republicans in the House to support these two Democratic proposals, which deliver real relief to families hit hard by the ongoing economic downturn," Rep. Markey concluded.